

Best Practices/Restoration Project Reports Toilet Replacement Program

Description

The City of Toronto plans to replace 450,000 water-guzzling toilets with six-litre water-efficient toilets by 2011. A toilet is the largest water consuming fixture in the home. By motivating residents and businesses to replace inefficient toilets, the City will delay the need to expand its water and wastewater infrastructure. The City offers a \$60 rebate (for a 6-litre toilet) or a \$75 rebate (for a dual flush toilet) to residents who buy eligible toilets. A higher rebate (up to \$150) is offered to the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors. The program is promoted widely, using a number of tactics and has a promotional budget of \$120,000. This eight-year plan is in its third year.

Background

Toronto's population is expected to increase by one quarter of a million people (from 2.2 million to almost 2.5 million people) in six years. The population growth poses a potential challenge for the City of Toronto's existing water infrastructure. Currently, the system provides sufficient water for its present population and it was designed with additional capacity to meet the needs of a larger population in the future. However, current water demand is higher than initial estimates, especially during the summer when residents water lawns, fill pools, and wash driveways. At this rate, the City estimates that it must begin expanding its water systems (includes water filtration plants, wastewater treatment plants, and new watermains) to accommodate its growing population.

Expanding the water system is an extremely expensive venture and could potentially cost \$220 million. Research shows that a system expansion could be avoided if the "average daily" and "peak day" (the one day in the year when water use is highest) demands were reduced by 15 percent by 2011. Toronto's water system was built to accommodate the "peak day" demand.

In 2002, Toronto Council adopted a *Water Efficiency Plan* to help with water demand management across the city. The plan identifies initiatives that would help the City to reduce the water demand of its existing population and defer or reduce the capital costs associated with constructing or expanding water and wastewater infrastructure.

Implementing water reducing initiatives, such as the Toilet Replacement Program, is more cost effective and cost save the City \$150 million.

Promotional Strategies

- Promote the rebate offer at point-of-purchase using banner posters, displays and stickers placed directly on qualified toilets to inform consumers about the rebate offer and to identify high performance water-efficient toilets.
- Post the toilet test results on the web detailing information about the flushing performance of various makes of toilets.
- City staff has developed relationships with marketing staff, retail sales staff and wholesale distributors to help promote the rebate program and benefits of water-efficient washing machines directly to consumers.

- The City's rebate offer for this program is advertised in print newspapers, on bus shelters, and on a popular local radio call-in renovation show. It is promoted in a residential newsletter, water bill inserts, mall displays, tradeshow, Environment Days (local councillor-hosted events), and on the web site.
- The Toilet Replacement Program is connected to all other water-efficient initiatives under the umbrella theme WaterSaver. All promotional pieces are marketed with this word mark to help the public to make the connection that a series of programs will help to reduce water use across the City.

Barriers

- We cannot accurately evaluate the number of old toilets that are being replaced with water-efficient models as not everyone applies for the rebate. As well, for competitive reasons, retailers were unwilling to say how many water-efficient models they had sold.
- The first generation of water-efficient toilets didn't work well and thus developed a bad reputation amongst plumbers, who advised their customers not to use water-efficient toilet.

Results

- By the end of 2004, the Toilet Replacement Program had achieved almost 50 percent of its target for this program (to reduce water use by 55 megalitres of water per day).
- This program and other water efficiency initiatives helped the City to reduce water use city-wide by six percent in 2004. The City was successful in achieving its goal for that year.
- The number of people visiting the City's web site that is designated to the Water Division increased from 370,000 visits to 450,000 visits in 2004. The most active pages were those containing information about the water efficiency initiatives.
- Residents have sent e-mails and letters inquiring about the various initiatives or complimenting the City for implementing the program.
- The benefits of water-efficient toilets and the City's rebate offer have been featured in a number of media including print, radio and television. Often the coverage takes a consumer angle and focuses on pros and cons of water efficient toilets. The coverage has been positive and has helped to promote the program goals and rebates.
- The City has partnered with Home Depot to promote the toilet program in-store and to provide rebates immediately to consumers.
- Large toilet manufacturers have partnered with the City to host special events in retail stores and to jointly-advertise the City's rebate offer in daily newspapers.

Photos (see attached)

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